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THE INTERIOR

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LINCOLN CENTENARY NUMBER

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The Story of Booth's Plot,

His Deed and the Penalty

By

**CLARA E.
LAUGHLIN**

Literary Editor of The Interior

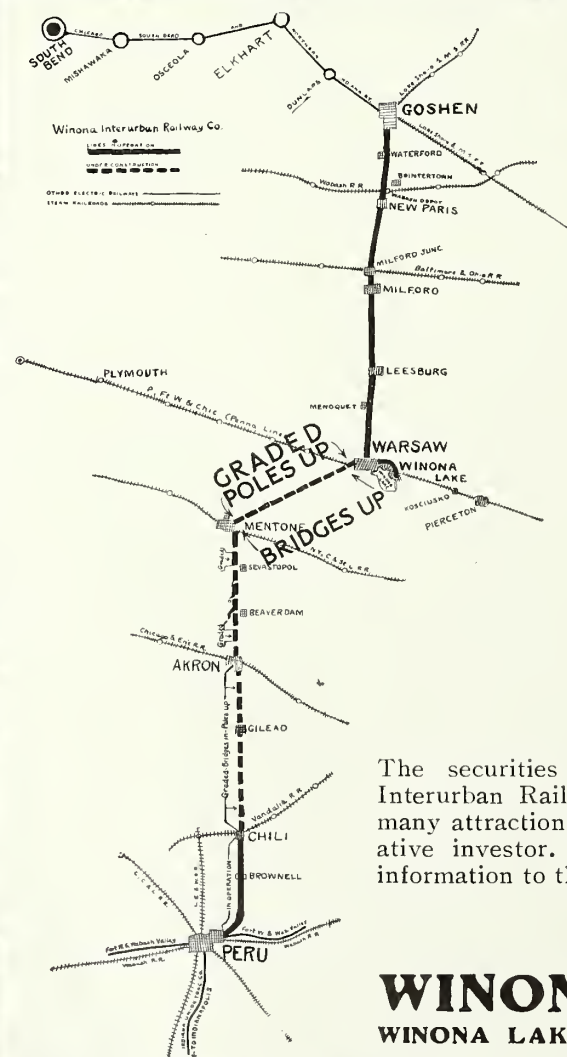


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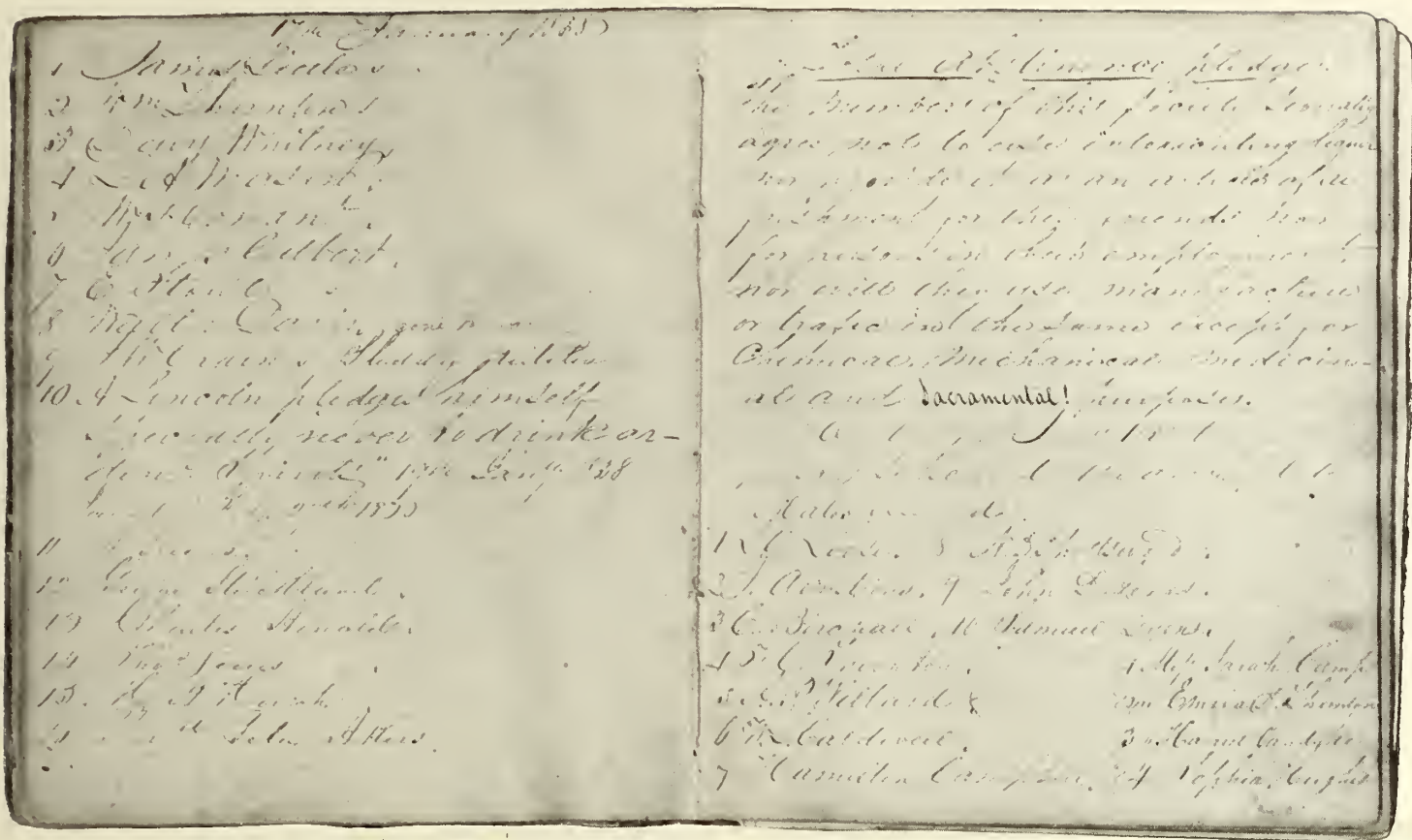


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Pledge taken by Abraham Lincoln January 19, 1838, as a Member of the Sangamon County Temperance Society
[Photographed from original record book. Names are not signatures but were copied by the secretary.]

Lincoln a Temperance Man

BY HOWARD H. RUSSELL, D.D.

"Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who know me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower, where I thought a flower would grow."—A. LINCOLN.

FLOWER for thistle. "Beauty for ashes!" The men who felt and lived that sentiment would naturally be in favor of sobriety and against the saloon. At this centennial anniversary of Lincoln's birth emphasis will be laid upon his character and service as an orator, a lawyer and a statesman. But in such a period of anti-liquor renaissance as the present, when saloons are being abolished at the rate of more than 10,000 a year, it is interesting to find that equal importance may be laid upon his career as an advocate of the temperance reform.

Foul Attempts to Make Lincoln a Liquor Ally

A fair discussion of this theme must take note of the fact that the friends of the liquor trade have claimed Lincoln as a champion of their cause. They say he was himself a retail liquor dealer and that he frequently spoke in favor of the traffic. A recent number of The Bar and Buffet reproduces one of the alleged quotations from Lincoln, as follows:

"Prohibition will work great injury to the cause of temperance. It is a species of intemperance within itself, for it goes beyond the bounds of reason in that it attempts to control a man's appetite by legislation, and in making crimes out of things that are not crime. A prohibition law strikes a blow at the very principles on which our governments are founded. I have always been found laboring to protect the weaker classes from the stronger, and I never can give my consent to such a law as you propose to enact. Until my tongue shall be silenced in death, I will continue to fight for the rights of men."

The conclusive reply to this as to all such statements is: First, that the liquor dealers when challenged have never produced proof of authenticity, and secondly, Major Merwin, a near friend of Lincoln's, testifies that he and Mr. Lincoln traveled and spoke together in favor of a prohibition amendment to the Illinois constitution which Lincoln said would "destroy destruction," and thirdly, the internal evidence from a literary

standpoint proves spurious all such alleged quotations. The whole quotation, both in spirit and language, is a bungling counterfeit.

As to the statement that Lincoln sold liquor, the following are the facts: In the fall of 1832, when Lincoln was 23 years old, he made an unhappy partnership in the grocery business with one W. F. Berry. Lincoln gave but little attention to the store. During the time he was in that business he read law, studied surveying and became deputy surveyor of the county. He was also the New Salem postmaster. Berry managed the store, and in March, 1833, Berry took out a license such as grocers generally had in that day. Berry was the bar's best customer, and when the store was sold, and Berry died, Lincoln paid off the partnership debts. It took him fifteen years to pay them. Miss Tarbell, in her "Life of Lincoln" (volume I., page 95), says:

"In a community in which liquor drinking was practically universal, at a time when whisky was as legitimate an article of merchandise as coffee or calico, when no family was without a jug, when the minister of the gospel could take his 'dram' without any breach of propriety, it is not surprising that a reputable young man should have been found selling whisky. Liquor was sold at all groceries, but it could not be lawfully sold in a smaller quantity than one quart."

When Douglas in his debates with Lincoln, fifteen years later, charged Lincoln with liquor selling, Lincoln retorted: "Yes, I was on one side of the bar and Douglas was on the other." It is evident he had very little, if any, personal part in that branch of the trade.

The Influence of a Dying Mother's Warning

Lincoln's interest in the temperance question began in boyhood and grew stronger with the years. The first incident, the foundation fact, offers a fascinating theme for a painter's art. It transpired near Gentryville, Indiana, in the pioneer days of 1818. The scene is in a log cabin—a single room, with a loft above. Here are found all the proofs of frontier privation. A mother upon her death bed, anxious for the future of the boy she

soon must leave, is asking him to promise never to drink intoxicating liquors. The boy involuntarily lifts his hand as he makes his vow. The boy is Abraham Lincoln. That pledge he gave under those pathetic circumstances was never forgotten and never broken.

Lincoln early gave signs of literary skill. At 14 years of age he wrote a composition upon the subject of "the temperance question" which attracted much attention. The minister, Rev. Aaron Farmer, thought enough of it to send it to an Ohio newspaper, in which it was published.

When the Washingtonian movement swept over the country in 1841 and 1842 Lincoln took a great interest in it, and he was invited to address the local society at the Presbyterian church in Springfield on Washington's birthday, February 22, 1842. That speech, which was printed upon the front page of *The Sangamon County Journal* on March 26, 1842, is one of the most remarkable temperance speeches ever delivered. It was temperate, discriminative and most eloquent. It is difficult to specially select any part from the speech which fills twenty-five pages of an ordinary book, for it is all intensely interesting and instructive.

The following extract, taken from near the close of the speech, will serve to show the keenness of thought and vigor of style with which the whole is replete:

"Whether or not the world would be vastly benefited by a total and final banishment from it of all intoxicating drinks, seems to me not now an open question. Three-fourths of mankind confess the affirmative with their tongues; and, I believe, all the rest acknowledge it in their hearts. Ought any, then, to refuse their aid in doing what the good of the whole demands? . . . There seems ever to have been a proneness in the brilliant and warm-blooded to fall into this vice—the demon of intemperance ever seems to have delighted in sucking the blood of genius and generosity. What one of us but can call to mind some relative, more promising in youth than all his fellows, who has fallen a victim to his rapacity? He ever seems to have gone forth like the Egyptian angel of death, commissioned to slay, if not the first, the fairest born of every family. Shall he now be arrested in his desolating career? . . .

"If the relative grandeur of revolutions shall be estimated by the great amount of human misery they alleviate and the small amount they inflict, then indeed will this be the grandest the world shall ever have seen. Of our political revolution of '76 we are all justly proud. . . . But . . . it . . . had its evils too. . . . Turn now to the temperance revolution. In it we shall find a stronger bondage broken, a viler slavery manumitted, a greater tyrant deposed; in it more of want supplied, more disease healed, more sorrow assuaged; by it no orphans starving, no widows weeping.

"And what a natural ally this to the cause of political freedom; with such an aid its march cannot fail to be on and on, till every son of earth shall drink in rich fruition the sorrow-quenching draughts of perfect liberty. . . . And when the victory shall be complete, when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth, how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both those revolutions that shall have ended in that victory! How nobly distinguished that people who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity both the political and moral freedom of their species!"

After reading the Washington's birthday speech one is not surprised to learn that in 1852 Lincoln joined the branch of the Sons of Temperance which was organized at Springfield, nor that he signed with others the request that Rev. James Smith would publish his lecture delivered at Springfield upon the subject, "A Discourse on the Bottle—Its Evils and the Remedy."

Judge Weldon has testified how, about this time, he called with Mr. Lincoln upon Mr. Douglas. It was during a session of court, and they called at Mr. Douglas's room in the hotel. Douglas was very hospitable and brought out a black bottle and poured the whisky out in three glasses. Judge Weldon says Mr. Lincoln thanked Mr. Douglas very kindly and said: "No, I have gone without so long now, that I think I will never begin." When serving his one term as a congressman in 1847, when another member of Congress who attended a social function with Lincoln chided him for refusing the proffered wine, Lincoln replied: "I promised my mother I would never drink." Still his friend urged that to taste the liquor as a token of ap-

preciation of hospitality could certainly do no harm. "A promise is a promise," replied Lincoln, "and a promise to a dying mother should surely be faithfully kept."

The Pledge that Lincoln Gave a Boy

It was about the same period, in the summer of 1846, that an incident occurred in Lincoln's career which seems likely to exercise a far-reaching influence on behalf of the temperance cause. When passing through Springfield, Illinois, in 1902 I went to Mr. Roland Diller's drug store to see the desk Mr. Lincoln had used when he was a member of the legislature about 1830. When Mr. Diller learned that I was engaged in temperance work, he told me that a man named Cleopas Breckenridge in that county could tell me something about Mr. Lincoln and his temperance work. A few months later, when I was about to revisit Springfield, Mr. Diller arranged with Mr. Breckenridge to meet me at the Leland Hotel, and Breckenridge kept his appointment, though he had to drive sixteen miles through a severe storm to do so. Breckenridge told me this very significant and interesting story. When he (Breckenridge) was about 10 years of age, his father arranged for a temperance meeting at the South Fork schoolhouse, not far from their home. About 150 people gathered under the shade of the trees outside the schoolhouse and listened to a very earnest temperance speech made by a young lawyer from Springfield.

At the close of the address he took a paper out of his pocket and said: "I have written a pledge of total abstinence and have signed it and would be glad to have my neighbors sign it with me." Many of the people signed it. "Sonny," said the speaker to young Breckenridge, "don't you want your name on this pledge?" He answered: "Yes, sir," and the speaker signed it for the boy. Then leaning over and lovingly stroking the boy's head he said: "Now, sonny, you keep that pledge, and it will be the best act of your life!"

Breckenridge went on to tell me how faithfully he had kept the pledge when he was on the Western plains, and during the four years he was a soldier in the Civil War, and so on to the present time. He is now a prosperous old farmer, the leader in Christian work in his community, and he testified that the pledge to abstain had been one element in his success. Then he gave me very earnestly this fact:

"The man who spoke that day at the South Fork schoolhouse, who signed my name for me to the pledge and put his hand in a blessing on my head, was Abraham Lincoln."

By diligent search, with Mr. Breckenridge's assistance, I found also three other living witnesses to the fact that Lincoln held that meeting in which they all signed the same pledge and have kept it ever since, and that he held other similar meetings in other parts of the county. Mr. Lamon in his "Life of Lincoln" (page 480) records the same striking fact. The three other persons I found were Moses Martin, L. E. Berry and Mrs. A. B. Galloway. To my surprise and gratification, Mr. Martin, when I called upon him at Edinburgh, Illinois, was able to give me the exact words of the pledge which Lincoln wrote and brought with him to the South Fork schoolhouse. Martin says Preston Breckenridge, the father of Cleopas, took off a copy of it that day, and he (Martin) went with Breckenridge to other schoolhouses and churches, and many others signed the Lincoln pledge in their meetings. Martin acted as secretary of the meetings, and in this way he committed the pledge to memory.

When we initiated the Lincoln Legion at Oberlin, Ohio, October 21, 1903, both Breckenridge and Martin were there to give their testimony in substance as I have given it here. At the close of the service more than a thousand of us stood together and with uplifted hand repeated after Martin, as he gave it to us sentence by sentence, the Lincoln pledge of 1846, for more than half a century treasured upon the tablets of his memory, now to be the Lincoln Legion pledge of the twentieth century:

"Whereas, the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage is productive of pauperism, degradation and crime, and believing it is our duty to discourage that which produces more evil than good, we therefore pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage."

Already nearly a half million have signed the Lincoln pledge, and it promises to form the basis for a still larger service in the future. Lincoln did many noble acts. One of them was to lay his hand lovingly upon the head of a farmer's boy and pledge him to a life of sobriety and abstinence.

The pledge of abstinence of his boyhood, thus renewed with others in his prime, Lincoln faithfully kept to the end of life. Dr. Diller told me also of Lincoln's brief perplexity when they

urged him to "treat" the committee who came to notify him of his nomination—"as if I did not know it already," said Lincoln. To Dr. Diller he said: "I have never had liquors in my house, and I don't want to begin now," and the committee were "treated" to "Adam's ale," as Lincoln called it in his toast.

The Foe of Liquor Still as President

In the midst of the absorbing cares of the Civil War Lincoln thoughtfully sent for his old friend Merwin, with whom he had campaigned for a prohibition amendment in Illinois, and sent him out among the soldiers to plead with them not to drink. I have seen the order in Lincoln's hand directing the officers to grant Merwin a hearing among the troops. One day Mr. Lincoln was ill out at sea upon a gunboat. The prairie life had not made him a good sailor. The captain brought him some champagne for a remedy. "No, thank you, captain," said President Lincoln. "I have seen too many men seasick on land from drinking that stuff!"

Upon the last day of the great President's life Mr. Merwin called at the White House, and in the brief visit, Merwin tells us, Lincoln said: "The next great conflict will be for the abolition of the liquor traffic."

As President, Lincoln had objected strenuously to putting an internal revenue tax upon intoxicating drinks. He foresaw just the harm which has come from propping up our government upon kegs and demijohns. Only as a necessary and temporary war measure did he consent to it. The mischief was done, and it has transpired as he forewarned. How he would have helped undo that wrong if he had lived!

Faithful to the principles of total abstinence and prohibition all his life, among his latest thoughts before the martyr's call came, was the inevitable next conflict, now on, against the satanic beverage liquor trade. Though dead, he yet speaketh, and more and more will Lincoln's voice be heard, and his influence felt, as a heroic pioneer for total abstinence and against the saloon.

The Moral Qualities of Lincoln's Politics

BY JENKIN LLOYD JONES, D.D.

THE FIRST impression received from studying Lincoln's state papers as officially compiled is of a wonderful terseness, a surprising brevity. Condensation is perhaps the last attainment of the scholar, the highest aim of college culture. But here is a man of no school, whose youth was spent far away from books and in little contact with culture, as generally understood, who has put forth a series of state papers of unrivaled clearness, suggestiveness, nervous eloquence and of unparalleled brevity. His five annual messages seem to cover all the ground, touch with peculiar power the great principles at issue, and still the longest of them covers less than sixteen pages of clear type in the authorized edition of his writings, while the messages of some of his successors would doubtless reach sixty to 100 pages in the same volume.

Scant Words Encompass Great Ideas

What formidable things have been the "Letters of Acceptance" of presidential candidates since Lincoln's day. But few of their devoted followers have waded through the dreary lengths. Lincoln's acceptance of the second nomination, in 1864, is condensed into twenty lines, but it was long enough to protect himself from misunderstandings concerning French and Mexican entanglements and to touch responsive chords in the hearts of all citizens.

His last inaugural document will stand among the great state papers of the world, second, perhaps, only to the deathless eloquence of the Gettysburg speech. It covers but sixty-five lines in this book, but they are lines of biblical directness and power. The most remarkable utterance of his official career, the Gettysburg speech, contains but 268 words. It covered one page of legal cap, which he carried in the crown of his hat. Message after message was sent to Congress concerning most weighty issues, but they seldom covered more than a page or two, and oftentimes were condensed into a few lines.

The cause of this brevity is not far to seek; it belongs to the simplicity of his character, which was that of a Greek temple. No verbiage could find lodgment on its clean columns. He was often eloquent but never rhetorical; there was no room for fuss and feathers in his life.

This splendid condensation which characterizes state documents testifies to the modesty of the man. Here is no attempt at fine writing, flourish of trumpet or exhibition of himself. He was preoccupied with his duties, hid behind his work; he had no more words than moments to waste. Conciseness was to him a native art in which he needed no schooling.

Adaptive Power in Variant Conditions

A second impression made by these documents is that of a wise opportunism; the power to discriminate between the things to do; the patience to wait; the expediency that is willing to concede where no principle is at stake. In a wonderful way he discerned between essentials and nonessentials at any given time. He could change his mind and say so; he could disagree with another and still cleave to him, be just to him. This often made him so trying to his friends, an enigma to his enemies. When Carl Schurz, with strange forgetfulness of his uniform and military subordination, frankly criticised the President and

made suggestions, the patient, far-seeing man in a courteous letter replied:

"If I must discard my judgment and take yours, I must also take that of others, and by the time I should reject all I should be advised to reject I should have none left, not even yours; for be assured, my dear sir, there are men who 'have heart in it' who think you are performing your part as poorly as you think I am performing mine."

After the battle of Gettysburg he wrote a letter to General Meade expressing his bitter disappointment: "Your golden opportunity is gone; I am distressed immeasurably because of it," he said. But he held the letter; it was never sent. Seven days later he wrote to General Howard:

"A few days having passed, I am now profoundly grateful for what was done, without criticism for what was not done. General Meade has my confidence as a brave and scholarly officer and as a true man."

A similar confession of mistaken judgment on his part came promptly to Grant after the Vicksburg triumph, and to Sherman after the march to the sea.

This high opportunism of the great President is most strikingly illustrated in his many amnesty proclamations, of which no less than eight, and probably more, are found in the volume referred to. Over and over again he held out the olive branch to all kinds of wrongdoers whose sins might be traced to weakness, ignorance, the unconscious bias of heredity or environment. The spirit of patience and forgiveness toward classes and groups, as well as individuals, was embodied in the many pardons which he delighted to write. He was the prince of pardoners, but never to the confusion of the main issue. The petition of "a large number of respectable citizens" carried less weight with him than did the request of a slip of a girl from Pennsylvania, unattended by governor, senator or army officer, who "wore no hoops": "I will pardon your brother!"

Confidence in the Wisdom of the People

The third definite impression of these official documents is the ever pressing superlative sense of justice—justice to individuals, to those in command, the perplexing and embarrassing brood of generals, and above all, justice to the enemies of his country. Many times is found inscribed on letters, orders, memoranda, etc.: "Not sent because deemed too severe." He could be harsh as truth and consequently gentle as love, tender as mercy. His confidence in the eternal right made him strong enough to bear with those who differed from him. The words of his first inaugural interpreted his official spirit all through:

"Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world? In our present conditions is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of nations with his eternal truth and justice be on your side of the North or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal of the American people."

His appeal was ever to "the better angel of our nature." He committed his Emancipation Proclamation "to the considerate judgment of mankind."

"Opportunism" is a dangerous word to be used in connection with Mr. Lincoln. It grates upon the ear. It has become associated with the time-serving spirit, the halting temper, that guidance of conduct from the without rather than from the within. All this is foreign to the spirit and the record of Lincoln. From the very first he said: "If anything is wrong, slavery is wrong. I never knew the time when I did not believe it was wrong." He never disguised his antagonism to it. And still he revoked the emancipation orders of Generals Fremont and Hunter, persistently resisted the importunities of his friends, waited until the hour had arrived.

One story of the administration of Mr. Lincoln has never been adequately told. That was his scheme of compensated emancipation. From considerations of policy and justice, economy and right, he persistently labored to make generous provision to compensate those who found their property so entangled. His first suggestion in this direction was made in November, 1861, concerning slavery in the state of Delaware. Again and again he returned to it, in messages to Congress, in interviews with prominent citizens in the South, in consultations with representatives of the border state. At least eight times is this matter seriously handled in the original documents before us. Over and over again he said in substance: "We have all sinned; we must all pay the penalty therefor."

Manly Superiority to Warping Influences

But the most characteristic, and alas! unique element in Lincoln's political career was his independence. He was not only a political come-outer but a great political stand-outer. "Make no promises; I will abide by none," was his message to his friends in the first convention. Pending the Baltimore convention Secretary Nicolay sent him a long confidential letter which occupied sixty lines, assuring him of his nomination, but on behalf of the politicians, seeking advice concerning vice-presidents and platforms. The document was returned with a four-line endorsement, as follows:

"Wish not to interfere about vice-president; cannot interfere about platform; convention must judge for itself."

He dared compose his cabinet of his rivals and antagonists—those who distrusted him and something worse—but he was President all the while. His public career gives high denial to the specious fallacy that is working such mischief in current politics; namely, that "ours is a government by party." This government makes and unmakes parties. They are tolerable only so far as they stand for real issues and the conflict that springs out of honest differences of opinion concerning fundamental principles. This independence made him a leader, a civic prophet, a political evangelist, whose power made weak men strong, halting men bold, while he held the reins of power which constitute him still a present force not only in the life of the nation but in the life of the world.

How prophetic he was in his statesmanship few can even yet realize. In September, 1863, in a letter to the "Sons of Temperance," he said:

"The reasonable men of the world have long since agreed that intemperance is one of the greatest if not the very greatest of all evils among mankind."

How he hated war! He never forgot that it was the direst calamity. And how he loved liberty! At the Baltimore Sanitary Fair he said:

"The world has never had a good definition of the word 'liberty,' and the American people just now are much in want of one. With some the word 'liberty' may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself and with the product of his labors, while with others the same word may mean for the same men to do as they please with other men and the product of other men's labors. . . . The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act as the destroyer of liberty, especially as the sheep was a black one."

Simple Fidelity to Lofly Ideals

How he anticipated that thing to which we give the name "commercialism"—the passion to speculate even in the front of

battle. Men lost sight of the flag in their greed for cotton. He said:

"Few things are so troublesome to the government as the fierceness with which the profits in trading are sought. The temptation is so great that nearly everybody wishes to be in it, regardless of whether the cotton-seller is loyal or rebel, whether he is paid in corn-meal or gunpowder. The officers of the army in numerous instances are believed to connive and share the profits, and thus the army itself is diverted from fighting the rebels to speculating in cotton. And steamboats and wagons in the pay of the government are set to gathering and carrying cotton, and the soldiers to loading cotton trains and guarding them."

In his first annual message he raised what he called a "warning voice," anticipating the labor problem:

"Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital and deserves much the higher consideration."

How he hated the office-seeker! He was glad when he had the varioloid because now he had something that the office-seekers would not want. How pathetic is his wail: "I might do something to save the country if I could only be released from the clamoring horde who demand the attention of the householder at one end while the home is on fire at the other end." The office-seeker he likened to the boy who wanted the captain to stop the steamboat in the midst of the rapids that he might recover the apple which had fallen overboard.

How fundamental these great traits of simplicity, patience, faith in right and independence of secondary influence are in the character of Abraham Lincoln, may be inferred when we find, away back in his maiden effort of 1837 when only 28 years of age, in an address before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield on "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions," he uttered these remarkable words which, in the light of subsequent history, glow with the imperishable light of a divine illumination:

"Here then is one point at which danger may be expected. The question recurs, 'How shall we fortify against it?' The answer is simple. Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution never to violate in the least particular the laws of the country, and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of '76 did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the constitution and laws let every American pledge his life, his property and his sacred honor. Let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample on the blood of his father and to tear the charter of his own and his children's liberty. Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap; let it be taught in schools, in seminaries and in colleges; let it be written in primers, in spelling-books and in almanacs; let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay of all sexes and tongues and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars."

Saw the Error of Their Ways

There is usually a canny practical element in the Scotchman's solid religious qualities. This story is told of a Caledonian petty officer.

At a British army post where a number of recruits were temporarily stationed an old sergeant was ordered to ascertain to what religious sect each man belonged, and to see that he joined the party told off for that particular form of worship. Some of the men had no liking for church, and declared themselves to be atheists. But the sergeant was Scotch and a man of experience.

"Ah, weel," said he, "then ye hae no need to kape holy the Sabbath, and the stables hae na been claned oot lately." And he ordered them to clean out the stables.

This occupied practically the whole day, and the men lost their usual Sunday afternoon's leave. Next Sunday a broad smile crept over the face of the sergeant when he heard that the atheists had become adherents of the Church of England.